Chapter 11

Case Study Analysis of a Social Skills Service Delivery Model with Intellectually Disabled Students

ABSTRACT

This chapter focuses on students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID). Social skills instruction is needed for any disability category, but more so with students who are diagnosed with intellectual disabilities. Thus, use of the social skills service delivery model with ID students is examined through two case studies, one in a middle school setting and another in a high school setting. This chapter also discusses the causes and characteristics, the educational placement and instructional strategies, and the eligibility criteria for students with an intellectual disability. The chapter concludes with a discussion about future trends for intellectually disabled students and service providers.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, children and adults with some type of learning challenge have often been referred to as mentally retarded. The term has a negative connotation, and thus people with learning difficulties as well as professionals in the field of special education find the term offensive. This was the case with a young woman named Rosa, whose family fought both their state and federal government to change the wording in all state and federal documentation from “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability.” This change became known as Rosa’s Law. Rosa’s Law resulted in the following changes:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: (1) Section 601(c)(12)(C) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400(c)(12)(C)) is amended by striking “having mental retardation” and inserting “having intellectual disabilities.”
- Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965: Section 7202(16)(E) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7512(16)(E)) is...
amended by striking “mild mental retardation,” and inserting “mild intellectual disabilities.”


The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) defines an intellectual disability as a “significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (§ 300.8[c][6]).

According to the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012), there were 463,000 students with a diagnosis of intellectual disability (ID) in United States schools during the 2009-2010 school year. This type of disability has decreased significantly during the past 40 years. During the 1976-1977 school year, students with special needs who had an intellectual disability diagnosis were at 2.2% of the total school population, and this percentage decreased drastically to 0.9% during the 2009-2010 school year. According to Friend (2011), the reasons for this drastic decrease in numbers are two-fold. One reason is that professionals in the field of special education have been able to make a better distinction between students with an intellectual disability and students who have a specific learning disability or an autism spectrum disorder. Second, because of the negative and offensive connotation of the term ‘mental retardation’, professionals within the field of special education became hesitant to label a child with this lifelong stigma.

This type of disability tends to target more males than females, at a rate of approximately 2 to 1 (Friend, 2011). In addition, African American males are “three times more likely than other students” (Friend, 2011, p. 237) to be diagnosed as intellectually disabled. This disproportionality has caused professionals in the field of special education to take a second look at the students who are being evaluated for these services and to implement service delivery models like Response to Intervention (RTI) to assist students who are struggling so that only those who truly need intellectual disability services will advance through the tiers, be diagnosed properly, and receive those services.

This chapter will:

1. Examine the needs of intellectual disability students and the challenges they face on a daily basis.
2. Discuss the causes and characteristics, educational placement and intervention strategies, and eligibility criteria for students with an intellectual disability.
3. Present two case studies that utilize a social skills service delivery model with intellectually disabled students.
4. Anticipate future trends for students with an intellectual disability.

### INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

#### Causes and Characteristics

There are a number of disorders that can result in intellectual disabilities. Probably the most common type of disorder that can cause an intellectual disability is Down’s syndrome. This disorder affects both males and females and has been found in all ethnic and cultural populations. Children born with this type of disability have an extra chromosome, which causes them to have slightly irregular physical features such as slanted eyes, small ears, and a tongue that appears to be too large for their mouth (Friend, 2011). These children may also have difficulties with their heart along with problems with vision and hearing.
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